

Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Labor and Public Employees, thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

My name is Roger Senserrich, and I'm a parent who lives in East Haven. I am the Policy and Communications Director at Connecticut Working Families. I testify today in support of H.B. 6859, an Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling, S.B. 1177, an Act Concerning One Fair Wage, and S.B. 1178, an Act Expanding Paid Sick Days.

H.B. 6859, an Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling

A job should be a source of stability and opportunity. Our job, in many ways, defines us; our job is something we can be proud of. It is how we earn a living, contribute to our community, and take care of our loved ones.

For many workers in our state, however, their jobs cannot provide this foundation. Instead of providing a predictable, stable paycheck, they become constant sources of anxiety and stress, with unpredictable schedules that change from one week to the next.

Unpredictable schedules pose a considerable challenge for workers. The constant uncertainty on their schedules means they cannot plan ahead, as they are always forced to adapt their lives around their shifts. They struggle to go to school, as they might have to miss class at any given time. They have a hard time working two jobs, as they might be called in at any time. Medical appointments, running errands, or just finding time for themselves becomes much more difficult.

For workers with children, unstable schedules are even a bigger problem. Finding childcare becomes a constant, urgent issue; most providers are not open day round, so late shifts inevitably result in a scramble to find a neighbor or relative that can take care of the kids. Any pediatrician appointment is even harder to get right; after school activities become a constant problem. Putting their own kids to bed is no longer routine, as parents might be called in for work shift at any time.

In addition to these impacts, workers with unpredictable schedules often must deal with unpredictable income and wages, as the total number of work hours worked might change dramatically from one week to the next. To the stress of not knowing when they will need to go in for a shift or how they will take care of their children, workers with unpredictable schedules have to add not knowing if they even will make enough money to pay rent or cover their bills.

Impacts and research

There are more than 250,000 hourly workers currently employed in retail, food services, hospitality, and long-term care in Connecticut. Survey data shows that two-thirds must maintain open availability for work, with no guarantee of being called for a shift (1). Contrary to industry claims, workers *do not* want or value on-call scheduling: 71% report that erratic schedules are a source of stress, and 72% say they experience conflicts between work and family

responsibilities. A full 74% said they wanted *more* stability and predictability in their work schedules.

Research makes very clear why workers prefer reliable schedules to so-called flexibility. A national study by Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett (2) found those with unstable work schedules were more likely to experience food and housing insecurity, fluctuating finances, and medical and utility hardships than workers in those industries with stable work hours. The combination of volatile incomes, constant disruption in household routine and dynamics, inability to plan ahead, and constant stress puts immense strain on workers' lives.

These negative outcomes persist even when controlled by income levels. In a study comparing workers in Seattle, a city that passed a secure scheduling ordinance scheduled in 2017, and its surrounding towns, workers that had predictable schedules were significantly less likely to suffer material hardships or face homelessness (3). In a remarkable result, they were also considerably happier with their life and more hopeful about the future, as well as much more likely to sleep better at night.

Unpredictable schedules also have the unintended result of interfering with access to public benefits like SNAP, HUSKY, or childcare subsidies (4). A few years ago, when I was working as SNAP outreach worker, fluctuating paychecks were often an endless source of aggravation and paperwork. SNAP recipients could find themselves jumping in and out of the income limits for the program any given week. More often than not, they just gave up, as they feared that a missed report could get them in trouble.

The added stress and anxiety from unreliable schedules often end up taking a toll on the health of workers. Research has found a strong association between erratic scheduling and higher levels of psychological distress, poor sleep quality, unhappiness, and depressive symptoms (5). Researchers found that on-call scheduling has a more significant impact on sleeping patterns than working night shifts or parenting a small child. Children also see the impact of the added stress of their parents, and the fact they don't have an established routine with them or see them as often. Children in households with unpredictable schedules are much more likely to show negative behavior expressions and toxic stress than their peers.

It is important to stress that underlying these impacts there are important racial and gender disparities. Women and people of color are significantly overrepresented in the sectors where on-call scheduling is the most prevalent. Our legacy of occupational segregation and associated patchwork of labor protections has contributed to create these barriers. Additionally, there is substantial research that shows that even within these industries, black and latino workers and women are much more likely to experience erratic scheduling (6).

Predictable scheduling legislation

Research also shows, however, that there is an easy solution to reverse these impacts - legislation. H.B. 6859 follows the design of similar legislation in Seattle, Philadelphia, New York

City, or Chicago, establishing a set of predictable scheduling practices that can provide workers with the stability they need to take care of themselves and their loved ones.

The Seattle study mentioned above shows, in very clear terms, that workers *immediately* see positive impacts on their lives just by *knowing* when they will be called in for work. There are not many bills in this building that once passed will make tens of thousands of working families sleep better at night. Predictable scheduling would do exactly that.

Business impacts

Even more significantly, there is extensive research that shows businesses actually *benefit* from the legislation. Following the Seattle ordinance, an extensive study (7) on the impact of the legislation on businesses. The consensus, even during COVID, is that they adapted quickly, realizing in short order how much employees appreciated the stability it provided.

This corroborates an extensive business literature around work scheduling. In 2015, Gap started a pilot on several of their stores adopting predictable scheduling practices. They immediately had a significant increase in labor productivity, reduced turnover, and a sharp, sustained increase in median sales (8). The test was so successful that it was quickly adopted company wide. Walmart launched a similar pilot in several locations in 2016, with comparable results, and quickly moved to adopt these practices across the board (9). Studies in restaurants and other retail stores have produced similar outcomes (10).

There is little mystery on why this is the case: workers appreciate it when you respect their time. Unstable scheduling is strongly associated with increased staff turnover. Providing stable schedules greatly increases staff retention, and workers become more productive as they gain experience. As a result, businesses see considerable savings both from higher productivity and reduced hiring costs. Companies are often reluctant to adopt these practices because the perceived savings of on-call staffing are immediately visible, while the associated costs are not immediately apparent. Once they adopt predictable schedules, however, the benefits quickly outweigh any potential costs.

This should be immediately obvious by looking at how small businesses work: they do not use on-call scheduling. They operate with smaller margins, and they fully understand that giving predictable, stable schedules to their employees is critical for their success. Large corporations that care little about their workers and more about their shareholders are the ones using on-call scheduling.

Flexibility

Under H.B. 6859 workers and businesses will still have the flexibility they need to operate. Workers will still be able to swap shifts with other employees with no restrictions. If they want to work more hours, they will be able to make themselves available, and their employers will be able to bring them in. The only difference now is that workers will get an extra hour of pay as an

incentive to come in, and that they have the right to say no without fear of retaliation. If by any chance a shift is cancelled, workers will receive half pay to account for a wage they were counting on, and the costs they incurred for setting their time aside.

Under current law, hourly workers are faced with a one-sided contract - they have agreed to work for a wage, but their employer can unilaterally alter how much work they will have access to with no advance notice or recourse. H.B. 6859 levels the playing field, setting a clear standard so workers know what to expect - and how much they will earn.

Conclusion

With H.B. 6859, this committee has the opportunity to pass a bill that will help tens of thousands of workers in the state sleep better at night and ensure that they can take care of their families – while at the same time making businesses stronger. Workers in our state deserve more. We need to pass this legislation.

S.B. 1177, an Act Concerning One Fair Wage S.B. 1178, an Act Expanding Paid Sick Days

Finally, I wanted to express my support for S.B. 1177, an Act Concerning One Fair Wage, and S.B. 1178, an Act Expanding Paid Sick Days.

S.B. 1177 will eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers, which has been set at \$6.38 an hour since 2017. Tipped workers would be brought up to the full minimum wage while still allowing for tips. This bill will affect 70,000 tipped workers in Connecticut that are 70% women and 36% people of color, giving them much needed stability.

SB 1178 will expand paid sick days to the more than 88% of Connecticut workers who are ineligible under our state's current law. This disproportionately impacts women, especially women of color, because they are overrepresented in industries that do not provide paid sick days. SB 1178 will also increase the number of paid sick time workers can accrue and use per year and allow them to take paid sick days to care for their chosen family.

I encourage this committee and vote in support of all these three bills and raise the standards for workers in our state. Thank you for your time today, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

- (1) <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/working-in-the-service-sector-in-connecticut/>
- (2) Schneider, Daniel, and Kristen Harknett. 2021. "Hard Times: Routine Schedule Unpredictability and Material Hardship Among Service-Sector Workers." *Social Forces* 99(4): 1682–709
- (3) Harknett, K., Scheneider, D., Irwin, V., "Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance. Year 2 Worker Impact Report", available at <https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/SecureSchedulingYearTwoReport.pdf>
- (4) For childcare subsidies: Rachidi, Angela, Russell Sykes, and Kerry Dsardjins. 2019. *The New Economy and Child Care: Nonstandard-Hour Work, Child Care, and Child Health and Well-Being*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica.
- (5) Schneider and Harknett, "Consequences of Routine Work-Schedule Instability"; Dugan et al., "Precarious Work Schedules and Sleep."
- (6) Storer, Adam, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett. 2019. "What Explains Race/Ethnic Inequality in Job Quality in the Service Sector?" Washington Center for Equitable Growth
- (7) Lambert, S. et al, "Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance 2022 Employer Implementation Report", December 2022; U. Chicago. Available from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m6UEPyLYqkYHqLVUQHepNAUEiAvR9dPx/view>
- (8) <https://worklifelaw.org/publications/Stable-Scheduling-Study-Report.pdf>
- (9) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/work/wp/2016/02/17/walmart-is-rolling-out-big-changes-to-worker-schedules-this-year/>
- (10) Batt, R. and Lakhani, T., "A NATIONAL STUDY of Human Resource Practices, Turnover, and Customer Service in the Restaurant Industry", January 2014. Available at <https://archive.ilr.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/National-Study-of-Human-Resource-Practices-High-Turnover-and-Customer-Service-in-the-Restaurant-Industry.pdf>